Title: Shepherding a Child’s Heart

Author: Tedd Tripp

Age relevance:
Relevant for parents with children of all ages but especially pertinent to those with 2+ year old children.

Summary
Many parenting books are based on hit-or-miss theories steeped in secular thinking. This one draws from Pastor Tripp's seasoned experience as a father and from God's Holy Word. Grounded in the Bible's divine plan for parenting, this guide defines your goals as a parent and provides the Scriptural methods for accomplishing them.

Additional Detail

PART ONE: Foundations For Biblical Childrearing

1) Getting to the Heart of Behavior:
   a) Proverbs 4:23 “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”
      Also see Luke 6:45. – The heart is the control center of life.

2) Your Child’s Development: Shaping Influences
   a) God demands that scripture be the shaping influence of our children
      (Deuteronomy 6, Ephesians 6, Colossians 3)
   b) Structure of Family –
      i) Shaping Influences:
         (1) Structure of Family Life – Nuclear family, Single parent etc,
         (2) Family Response to Failure- Encouraging or sarcasm
         (3) Family Values- What is important to parents
         (4) Family History- Experiences of parents, deaths, divorces
         (5) Family Roles- How involved is the father in the family?
         (6) Family conflict Resolution – Does the family talk about problems?
      ii) Mistakes in Understanding Shaping Influences:
         (1) Proverbs 4:23 - The heart is the fountain from which life flows, a child’s
            heart determines how he/she responds to your parenting.

3) Your Childs Development: Godward Orientation – the trim of the sail determines the
direction of the boat, God determines how a child reacts to the circumstances in life.
a) Proverbs 9:7-10 – it is the fear of the Lord that makes a man wise and it is that wisdom that determines how he responds to the correction.

b) Godward Orientation – God or idols, no neutrality. God has revealed himself to all men, Romans 1:18-19. Even young children either bow to God or idols, even if not conscious of doing so. Proverbs 22:15 “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.” Remedy is not changing the home but addressing the heart.

c) Implications for Childrearing –
   i) We must engage children to find fulfillment and happiness in God. Tasks to do so include fair punishment reflecting God’s view of sin, values of home to be scripturally informed, control the flow of events so never chaotic, provide a healthy constructive atmosphere.

4) You’re in Charge –
   a) Confusion about Authority: Christian parents must clearly understand the nature of Godly parenting and children must be trained that God calls them to obey always.
   b) Called to be in Charge: Deut 6:2 - God’s goal for Israelites is generations to keep His decrees. Eph 6:4 - Bring children up in the way of the Lord.
   c) Called to Obedience: Proverbs 6:32 - The corrections of discipline are the way to life. We always stress both child and parent under God’s control and that is reason for punishment being meted out.
   d) No place for anger – Fear of God not man. James 1:19-20, slow to anger, man’s anger doesn’t bring the righteousness of God. Correction is a reminder that sinful behavior offends God.
   e) Benefits to the child: Proverbs 15:5, 29:15 child learns to receive correction and gains wisdom and understanding.
   f) Discipline and Love: A balance? NO - Proverbs 3:12 - The Lord disciplines those he loves. Proverbs 13:24 - He who spares the rod hates his son, he who loves is careful to discipline.

5) Examining Your Goals: What goals do we communicate to be important to our Child?
   a) Unbiblical Goals: Success, to “do well”
      i) Developing special skills: sports music, etc…Are you concerned by values taught by coaches and instructors? Is there biblical content in these activities? Does true success depends on these activities?
      ii) Psychological Adjustment: Building self esteem.
   b) Saved Children: Parents want kids to say “The Prayer”. Family worship: have daily worship but no true spirituality. Well behaved Children – goal to raise well behaved kids. Are these the correct goals?
   c) Biblical Warning against Cultural influence: e.g. Israelites were to show no mercy and drive out the nations from Canaan. We are like Israel and must reject those things that are abhorrent to our God.
d) Mixed Signals: Psalm 36 - It is only in His light that we see light. Yet we help them adapt to a culture that does not know God.

6) Reworking Your Goals

a) Developing special skills- The skills we develop should be with the chief end of man in mind.
   i) Do coaches teach to give thanks to God for child’s ability?
   ii) What value is taught when Sabbath takes second fiddle to games, practice?
   iii) Biblical worldview says take care of body as stewardship of what God has provided. We must be concerned with strength and stamina for serving God.

b) Saved Children – A spiritual event is not a replacement for spiritual nurture

c) Well Behaved Children – manners can be social manipulation rather than an outward expression and application of the duty of loving my neighbor as myself.

d) Good Education – Child should learn to do work diligently for God.

7) Discarding Unbiblical Methods – Biblically the method is as important as the objectives

a) Unbiblical methods –
   i) I didn’t turn out so bad – accepting the way I was raised
   ii) Pop psychology – bribery, contracts i.e. crass self interest
   iii) Behavior modification – reward good behavior ignore or punish bad behavior
   iv) Righteous – Temporal blessings come from obedience to God.
   v) Emotionalism – Parents saying it makes me sad i.e. becomes about the parent and emotion. Also timeouts with ignoring…hurting child’s feelings,
   vi) Punitive correction – Grounding does not teach Biblical correction of the heart. Child will learn to cope with grounding but not necessarily learn to have a Godly heart.

8) Embracing Biblical Methods: Communication

a) Two Elements: Rich full communication and the rod. Proverbs 23:23-26
b) Communication is dialogue not monologue. Must learn to express thoughts. Goal must be to understand child, many never learn that skill.

c) Focus on understanding – must try to understand what is going on inside them since it is out of the heart that the mouth speaks, we must engage to know inside.

9) Embracing Biblical Methods: Types of Communication:

a) 1 Thessalonians 5 - Warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with every one. Point – different conditions in the hearer require different communication.
   i) Encouragement –to inspire and fill with hope and courage
   ii) Correction – gives insight into what is wrong and what may be done to correct the problem.
iii) Rebuke – a censure of behavior.
iv) Entreaty – pleading soliciting even begging used in cases of great import.
v) Instruction – providing a lesson a precept or information that will help child understand the world.
vi) Warning – alerts us to danger while still time to escape unharmed. Warning preserves.
vii) Teaching – process of imparting knowledge, scriptural knowledge teaches your child

10) Embracing Biblical Methods: A Life of Communication – it disciplines and disciples. It must be a lifestyle. You will never have the hearts of your children if you only talk to them when things are wrong.

a) Shepherding the heart – to help them understand themselves
b) Counting the Cost – True communication takes time, thought, energy. Be on lookout for when child is open and drop everything when they are.

11) Embracing Biblical Methods: The Rod

a) Children are not born ethically and morally neutral (Jeremiah 17:9) and within the heart grows seeds of destruction. Rod addresses needs within a child. Proverbs 22:15 - Folly is bound up in heart of a child living off desires and selfishness. The rod drives this from the child if done per next chapter. Proverbs 23:14 punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.
b) The Function of the rod – imparts wisdom proverbs 29:15
c) What is the rod? A Parent in faith toward God and faithfulness toward his or her children, undertaking the responsibility of careful, timely, measured and controlled use of physical punishment to underscore the importance of obeying God, thus rescuing the child from continuing in his foolishness until death.
d) Distortions of the Rod – No unbridled temper, cannot hit when we wish, not venting of frustration, not retribution, not associated with anger.
e) Fruit of the Rod – Rod shows Gods authority over Mom and Dad, trains child to be under authority, demonstrates parental love and commitment, yields a harvest of peace and righteousness, returns child to a place of blessing avoiding lust driven life.

12) Embracing Biblical Methods: Appeal to the Conscience

a) God has given children a reasoning capacity that distinguishes right and wrong. i.e. written on hearts Rom 2:12-16

PART TWO: Shepherding Through the Stages of Childhood

1) Infancy to Childhood: Training Objectives
a) Primary Characteristic – Change: first stage of development, from birth to age 4/5 years

b) Understanding Authority – as parents we need a single training objective.
   
   i) One Big Lesson: “He is an individual under authority. He has been made by God and has a responsibility to obey God in all things.” (Ephesians 6:1-3).
   
   ii) Godward Focus: children must learn that they are made for God, they have a duty to Him, He rules over them, and they owe Him obedience.

c) Circle of Blessing – “Children are to live within the circle of submission to parental authority”
   
   i) Things go well if the children learn to honor and obey
   
   ii) Safety rather than danger: child is in danger if he is rebellious,
   
   iii) The rescue function: the rod and communication is the rescue,

d) Honoring Defined: “Honoring parents means to treat them with respect and esteem because of their position of authority.”

e) Obedience Defined: “The willing submission of one person to the authority of another.”

f) Call for Consistency: “Rules have to be the same every day”
   
   i) “If you understand the fear of the Lord, you will not allow your child to ignore God’s law without intervening.”

g) Process of Appeal: once the child understands they are under authority you can teach them how to appeal in a respectful manner

h) Shepherding Your Children in Godly Attitudes: children must learn that by living in God’s world means submitting to that good and wise God in all things.
   
   i) Teach them about their hearts’ desire for rebellion, that they are inclined to disobey and that we need God’s help and to put our trust in Him.

2) Infancy to Childhood – Training Procedures - Consistency is key. Disobedience coupled with a failure to discipline sends mixed signals to the child.

   a) The “When” of Spanking
      
      i) When to spank – when there is a clear directive given that the child has heard and understood, and the child does not obey without valid excuse and/or delays and/or challenges

   b) The “How” of Spanking
      
      i) Problems to avoid: responding in anger, treating child without proper respect.
      
      ii) Focus on issues of the heart and combine firmness with kindness and gentleness.

   c) Procedure to discipline with child’s dignity:
      
      i) The “Why” of Spanking
         
         (a) God commands it
         
         (b) Discipline addresses the heart, not just the behavior – spanking enables you to do this.

      ii) When is My Child Old Enough?
(a) when she is old enough to resist your directives – that is disobedience/rebellious responses

iii) What If I am Too Mad
   (a) this happens to every parent, and you are in no position to engage in biblical discipline.

iv) What if my Child is Lying to Me?
   (a) try to get an honest response through discussion
   (b) remind child that God requires integrity; we will all give an account to Him in His court.

3) Childhood: Training Objectives

a) Childhood: age 5-12, child is developing independence, more time away from parents
b) The Change in Focus from Stage One: address behavior that is wrong, but not defiant
   i) i.e. Selfishness is wrong, but not defiant
   ii) Goal is that the child will see the ugliness of wrong behavior
c) Problem of Phariseeism: If we structure things around rules, then child just learn to keep the rules
   i) Child may be well behaved, but the child will not learn that wicked attitudes are also a sin.
d) Three-Pronged Tool of Diagnosis: a way to look at your child and understand his needs, evaluate your child in the three areas below every 6 months with your spouse (write down concerns, things you are pleased with, and strategies to deal with areas of concern)
   i) The Child in a Relationship to God
      (1) Does he have a relationship with God?
      (2) Question his understanding of God’s nature, His grace and salvation
   ii) The Child in Relationship to Himself
      (1) What does he think/understand about himself?
   iii) The Child in Relationship to Others

4) Childhood: Training Procedures

a) Addressing the Heart
   i) The temptation to is focus on behavior, but the heart directs the behavior (Luke 6:45)
b) Appealing to the Conscience
   i) Children need heart change, conviction of sin = heart change
   ii) They need to know that they have broken their covenant with God, and that inner man is guilty before God
c) Developing Character
   i) Training Character: “Character could be defined as ‘living consistently with who God is and who I am’”
d) Interpreting Behavior in Character Terms
i) Make sure to address appropriate character issues from a behavior: we often see a fight over a toy as just that, but it is really the child being selfish

5) Teenagers: Training Objectives

   a) Signs of the Times
      i) Benchmarks: puberty and time when child leaves home
      ii) Children often very insecure about bodies and thoughts, vulnerable, anxious – somewhere between a child and an adult

   b) Rebellion
      i) Some forms of rebellion are child’s attempt to establish individuality, but often rebellion has deeper roots.
      ii) Rarely does a teen who is in heart submission become rebellious by virtue of the influence of another

   c) Three Foundations for Life: Goal is to see the daily instruction throughout your child’s life brought together and internalized by him
      i) Fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7), 1st foundation in life
         (1) The question is “what” your child will worship, freely confront child on the irrationality of worshipping a lesser god (idols)
      ii) Adherence to Parental Instruction: Proverbs 1:8-9, 2nd foundation
         (1) Child will be richly blessed
      iii) Disassociation with the Wicked: Proverbs 1:10, 3rd foundation
         (1) Most powerful way to keep your children from seeking the wicked is to make home an attractive place to be

6) Teenagers: Training Procedures

   a) Internalization of the Gospel
      i) Goal – to see your child develop autonomous faith
      ii) Requires the work of the Holy Spirit, no parent can do that work
      iii) The goal in all training is to see your children come to the place where they have recognized their need for God, embrace Christ, and see their life in light of the Kingdom

   b) Shepherding the Internalization of the Gospel: this is your role as a parent during this period

   c) Developing a Shepherding Relationship with Teens: assuming your child recognizes your authority
      i) Authority vs. Influence
         (1) Remember as child gets older our authority decreases and influence increases
         (2) Influence “represents the willingness of your child to place himself under your authority because he trusts you.

   d) Shepherding through Doubt
      i) Every person will go through doubt – part of internalization is becoming self-conscious of faith
e) Positive Interaction
   i) Objective: ministry with your child, positive relationship, source of
      encouragement and inspiration, to see them find comfort and strength in
      knowing God
f) Developing an Adult Relationship
   i) Marks sensitivity that child is becoming an adult
g) Waiting for the Right Time
   i) Must increasingly make room for teen’s different style and manner, and hold
      correction for moral and ethical failures
h) Allowing Room for Disagreement
   i) Child does not need to agree with you on everything in order to respect you.
      Adults often disagree with each other and remain friends.
i) Beyond Internalization - you want your child to:
   i) Develop a Christian mind
   ii) Develop friendships with adults: within the church and community, and
       among their peers
   iii) Discover and develop their peculiar ministry niche
   iv) Determine a career “in which they can fulfill the cultural mandate and God’s
       command that they support themselves and share with others in need.”
j) Entrusting your children to God
   i) No longer the on-site shepherds
   ii) How they turn out will depend on the nature of their Godward commitment

Author's Bio

Tedd and Margy Tripp's Bio:

Tedd Tripp has been a pastor at Grace Fellowship Church in Hazleton, Pennsylvania since June 1983. For several years, he served as a counselor for Christian Counseling and Education Foundation. Tedd and his wife, Margy, founded Immanuel Christian School in 1979, where he also served as a teacher and principal for four years. He continues to serve as the administrator on the board of Immanuel Christian School.

Tedd received a Bachelor of Arts in history from Geneva College, a Master of Divinity from Reformed Episcopal Seminary, and a Doctor of Ministry from Westminster Theological Seminary.

Tedd was born in 1946 in Toledo, Ohio. He married Margy in 1968. Before attending seminary, he worked in industry and building trades. Tedd and Margy
have three children born in 1969, 1972, 1973. By God’s grace all are believers. His oldest son, Tedd, is married with three children. His daughter, Heather, is newly married. His youngest son, Aaron, is married and has two children. Since 1994, Tedd has maintained an extensive ministry as a conference speaker and presenter of Shepherding a Child's Heart seminars.

Other resources (website, other books, etc.)

http://www.gfc hazleton.org/staff.htm